

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for permitting the sending of electronic mail (email), comprising:
under control of a sender:
 - accepting a recipient identifier;
 - providing sender information along with a petition provider identifier to a recipient;
under control of the recipient:
 - providing the sender information to a petition provider identified by the petition provider identifier;
 - accepting a petition from the petition provider;
determining whether the petition is acceptable based on at least one of: 1) a sender identity verification method; 2) user input; and 3) third party information; and
wherein if the petition is acceptable, the sender is permitted to send email to the recipient.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein:
the sender information can include at least one of: 1) a sender identification method; and 2) the recipient identifier.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
providing confirmation of the determination to the sender.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein:
the step of accepting the recipient identifier is a result of a Web-based interaction between the recipient and the sender.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein:
the recipient identifier is an email address.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein:

the identity verification method is one of: 1) an email header "From" address; 2) a password; 3) an Internet Protocol (IP) address; and 4) a digital signature.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein:
the step of determining whether a petition is acceptable utilizes at least one rule, wherein the at least one rule is evaluated against the petition.
8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
prompting a user for a decision regarding whether or not to accept the petition.
9. The method of claim 1 wherein:
the recipient comprises a Web browser.
10. The method of claim 9 wherein:
the sender information is provided to the petition provider via a Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) redirect sent to the Web browser.
11. The method of claim 9 wherein:
the petition is provided to a petition processor via a Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) redirect message sent to the Web browser; and
wherein the petition processor makes said determination.
12. The method of claim 9 wherein:
the Web browser can identify the petition based on a Multipurpose Internet Mail Extension (MIME) type.
13. The method of claim 9 wherein:
the petition provider identifier and the sender information can be combined to form a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) that the Web browser can use to access the petition provider.

14. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
providing the petition to a petition processor.
15. The method of claim 14 wherein:
the petition processor requires authorization credentials.
16. The method of claim 1 wherein:
the sender identity verification method can be used by an email provider to verify
that an email message is from the sender.
17. The method of claim 1 wherein:
the petition provider generates the petition based on one or more rules.
18. The method of claim 17 wherein:
a rule can determine at least one of: 1) whether to generate the petition; 2) a
format of the petition; 3) an identity of a petition processor; and 4) a recipient email
address.
19. The method of claim 17 wherein:
a rule can be triggered based on the recipient identifier.
20. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
adding the sender to an email access list if the petition is acceptable; and
wherein the email access list is used to determine whether or not email from a
sender is permitted to reach the recipient.
21. A method for permitting the sending of electronic mail (email), comprising:
under control of a sender:
accepting a recipient identifier;
generating a petition wherein said generation is based on the evaluation of
at least one rule that determines the format of the petition based on the

recipient identifier;
providing the petition to a recipient;
under control of the recipient:
accepting the petition;
determining whether the petition is acceptable based on at least one of: 1) a sender identity verification method; 2) user input; and 3) third party information; and
wherein if the petition is acceptable, the sender is permitted to send email to the recipient.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising:
providing the recipient identifier to a petition provider; and
accepting a petition from the petition provider.
23. The method of claim 21 wherein:
the sender information can include at least one of: 1) a sender identification method; and 2) the recipient identifier.
24. The method of claim 22 wherein:
the petition provider and the sender are part of the same system.
25. The method of claim 21 wherein:
the step of accepting the recipient identifier is a result of a Web-based interaction between the recipient and the sender.
26. The method of claim 21 wherein:
the recipient identifier is an email address.
27. The method of claim 21 wherein:
the identity verification method is one of: 1) an email header "From" address; 2) a password; 3) an Internet Protocol (IP) address; and 4) a digital signature.

28. The method of claim 21 wherein:
the step of determining whether a petition is acceptable utilizes at least one rule,
wherein the at least one rule is evaluated against the petition.
29. The method of claim 21, further comprising:
prompting a user for a decision regarding whether or not to accept the petition.
30. The method of claim 21 wherein:
the recipient comprises a Web browser.
31. The method of claim 30 wherein:
the petition is provided to a petition processor via a Hypertext Transfer Protocol
(HTTP) redirect sent to the Web browser; and
wherein the petition processor makes said determination.
32. The method of claim 30 wherein:
the Web browser can identify the petition based on a Multipurpose Internet Mail
Extension (MIME) type.
33. The method of claim 21, further comprising:
providing the petition to a petition processor.
34. The method of claim 33 wherein:
the petition processor requires authorization credentials.
35. The method of claim 21 wherein:
the sender identity verification method can be used by a petition processor to
verify that an email message is from the sender.
36. The method of claim 22 wherein:
the petition provider generates the petition based on one or more rules.

37. The method of claim 36 wherein:
a rule can determine at least one of: 1) whether to generate the petition; 2) a format of the petition; 3) an identity of a petition processor; 4) a recipient email address.
38. The method of claim 36 wherein:
a rule can be triggered based on the recipient identifier.
39. The method of claim 21, further comprising:
adding the sender to an email access list if the petition is acceptable; and
wherein the email access list is used to determine whether or not email from a sender is permitted to reach the recipient.
40. A method for permitting a sender to provide electronic mail (email) to a recipient, said method comprising:
providing a recipient email address to the sender;
providing a petition to the recipient, wherein the petition includes a sender identity verification method;
determining whether the petition is acceptable based on authorization credentials and at least one of: 1) the sender identity verification method; 2) user input; and 3) third party information;
adding the sender to an email access list if the petition and the authorization credentials are acceptable; and
wherein the email access list is used to determine whether or not email from the sender is permitted to reach the recipient.
41. The method of claim 40, further comprising:
providing confirmation of the determination to the sender.
42. The method of claim 40 wherein:
the step of providing the recipient email address to the sender is a result of a Web-

based interaction between the recipient and the sender.

43. The method of claim 40 wherein:

the sender identity verification method can be used by the recipient to verify that an email message is from the sender.

44. The method of claim 40 wherein:

the identity verification method is one of: 1) an email header "From" address; 2) a password; 3) an Internet Protocol (IP) address; and 4) a digital signature.

45. The method of claim 40 wherein:

the petition is provided to a Web browser.

46. The method of claim 45 wherein:

the Web browser can identify the petition based on a Multipurpose Internet Mail Extension (MIME) type.

47. The method of claim 40 wherein:

the step of determining whether a petition is acceptable utilizes at least one rule, wherein the at least one rule is evaluated against the petition.

48. The method of claim 40, further comprising:

prompting a user for a decision regarding whether or not to accept the petition.

49. A system comprising:

a means for providing a recipient email address to the sender;

a means for providing a petition to the recipient, wherein the petition includes a sender identity verification method;

a means for determining whether the petition is acceptable based on authorization credentials and at least one of: 1) the sender identity verification method; 2) user input; and 3) third party information;

a means for adding the sender to an email access list if the petition and the authorization credentials are acceptable; and

wherein the email access list is used to determine whether or not email from the sender is permitted to reach the recipient.

50. A system for permitting the sending of electronic mail (email), comprising:
 a sender component operable to accept a recipient identifier and generate sender information, wherein the sender information can be used to generate a petition;
 a petition provider component operable to generate a petition based on the sender information and at least one rule; and
 wherein the petition includes a sender identity verification method which can be used to verify the identity of the sender.

51. The system of claim 50, further comprising:
 a web browser operable to accept the sender information from the sender component and provide the sender information to the petition provider component.

52. The system of claim 50, further comprising:
 a petition processor component operable to accept the petition and determine whether the petition is acceptable based on at least one of: 1) the sender identity verification method; 2) user input; and 3) third party information; and
 wherein if the petition is acceptable, the sender component is permitted to send email to a recipient associated with the recipient identifier.

53. The system of claim 52, further comprising:
 a web browser operable to accept the petition from the petition provider component and to provide the petition to the petition processor.

54. The system of claim 52 wherein:
 the petition processor component can provide a confirmation to the sender.

55. The system of claim 52 wherein:
the browser can identify the petition based on a Multipurpose Internet Mail Extension (MIME) type.
56. The system of claim 50 wherein:
the sender identification verification method is one of: 1) an email header "From" address; 2) a password; 3) an Internet Protocol (IP) address; and 4) a digital signature.
57. The system of claim 52 wherein:
the petition processor determines whether or not to accept a petition and add the sender to an email access list for a recipient.
58. The method of claim 50 wherein:
the at least one rule can determine at least one of: 1) whether to generate the petition; 2) a format of the petition; and 3) an identity of a petition processor.
59. The method of claim 50 wherein:
the at least one rule can be triggered based on the recipient identifier.
60. A machine readable medium having instructions stored thereon that when executed by a processor cause a system to:
accept a recipient identifier;
provide a petition to a recipient wherein the recipient corresponds to the recipient identifier and wherein the petition is based on the evaluation of at least one rule;
determine whether the petition is acceptable based on at least one of: 1) a sender identity verification method; 2) user input; and 3) third party information; and
wherein if the request is acceptable, the sender is permitted to send email to the recipient.
61. A computer data signal embodied in a transmission medium, comprising:
a code segment including instructions to accept a recipient identifier;

a code segment including instructions to provide a petition to a recipient wherein the recipient corresponds to the recipient identifier and wherein the petition is based on the evaluation of at least one rule;

a code segment including instructions to determine whether the petition is acceptable based on at least one of: 1) a sender identity verification method; 2) user input; and 3) third party information; and

wherein if the request is acceptable, the sender is permitted to send email to the recipient.

62. A method comprising:

accepting a recipient identifier, wherein the recipient identifier can be used to identify an electronic mail (email) recipient;

generating a petition based on the recipient identifier and at least one petition rule, wherein the at least one petition rule includes at least one of: 1) a sender identification method; and 2) a recipient; and

wherein the petition can be used by a email provider to allow a recipient to receive email from a sender.

63. The method of claim 62, further comprising:

adding the sender to an email access list for the recipient.

64. The method of claim 62, further comprising:

providing the petition to a petition processor, wherein the petition processor can determine if the petition is valid.

65. The method of claim 62, further comprising:

determining whether the recipient is licensed to invoke petition generation.